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Item 7 of the provisional agenda*

DEVELOPMENT AND PROMOTION OF MORE EFFECTIVE ACTION AGAINST ILLICIT DRUG TRAFFICKING THROUGH REGIONAL CO-OPERATION IN DRUG LAW ENFORCEMENT

Report of the Sub-Commission on Illicit Drug Traffic and Related Matters in the Near and Middle East on its twenty-sixth session, held at Vienna from 24 to 25 January 1990

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* E/CN.7/1990/1.

I. MATTERS CALLING FOR ACTION BY THE COMMISSION ON NARCOTIC DRUGS OR BROUGHT TO ITS ATTENTION

Draft decision to be recommended by the Commission on Narcotic Drugs for adoption by the Economic and Social Council

1. The Sub-Commission on Illicit Drug Traffic and Related Matters in the Near and Middle East recommends to the Commission on Narcotic Drugs the approval of the following draft decision for adoption by the Economic and Social Council:

DRAFT DECISION

Membership of the Sub-Commission on Illicit Drug Traffic and Related Matters in the Near and Middle East *

The Commission on Narcotic Drugs recommends to the Economic and Social Council the adoption of the following draft decision:

"At its ... plenary meeting, on ... 1990, the Economic and Social Council, taking note of the report of the Sub-Commission on Illicit Drug Traffic and Related Matters in the Near and Middle East on its twenty-sixth session and the relevant part of the report of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs on its eleventh special session, decided to approve the application by Bahrain for membership in the Sub-Commission."

II. REGIONAL TRENDS IN THE ILLICIT DRUG TRAFFIC

2. The Sub-Commission considered item 3 of its agenda, on regional trends in the illicit drug traffic, at its 1st and 2nd meetings, on 24 January 1990.

3. All those who spoke on item 3 expressed great concern at the escalation of drug abuse and illicit traffic in the region and reiterated the importance of concerted regional action to deal with the problem. Many speakers provided details on recent trends in drug abuse and trafficking in their countries. Some presented their countries as transit States owing to their geographical position in relation to producer and consumer countries.

4. Trafficking in opium, which had been gradually declining in recent years, had increased significantly in the past two years owing to an increase in production. Large seizures were reported by India, Iran (Islamic Republic of) and Pakistan. The representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran stated that the bulk of the 22 tons of opium seized in the first nine months of 1989 in his country stemmed from operations in three provinces along its eastern border. Traffic in morphine continued; major seizures had been made in Pakistan, where a factory for producing morphine tablets had been dismantled, and small seizures had been made in Turkey.

5. It was observed that an increase in demand and high profits had contributed to the illicit production of heroin on a large scale. Trafficking in heroin continued unabated. The trend was expected to continue given the record opium harvest in the region of the Golden Triangle. Significant seizures had been made in India, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Jordan, Pakistan and Turkey. India continued to be faced with transit traffic in heroin, mainly from south-west Asia.

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* See paragraph 35 below.

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6. In 1989, Bangkok had become an important source of heroin for some countries of the Gulf region. The meeting was informed that in spite of effective law enforcement action, which had led to record seizures in the region, traffickers had succeeded in transporting substantial quantities of heroin from the Near and Middle East to western Europe, mainly over the Balkan route. Important seizures of heroin from the Near and Middle East had been made in western Europe. The observer for the International Criminal Police Organization (ICPO/Interpol) stated that, while important seizures of heroin originating from the Near and Middle East had been made in western Europe, there had been no clear pinpointing of where, in that region, the production of opium or its conversion into heroin was taking place. Mention was made of the use of Africans, particularly Nigerian nationals, in smuggling heroin from the Middle East to Europe via Africa. African couriers had extended their range of activity to include Bangkok, and several seizures had been made at the airport there.

7. The representative of Pakistan drew the attention of the Sub-Commission to the critical situation regarding heroin abuse in his country. In addition to using Pakistan for the trans-shipment of heroin, traffickers had successfully introduced heroin to the drug-dependent population who had previously been abusing mainly opium and psychotropic substances. Heroin was being trafficked in large volumes through the border areas of Afghanistan and the tribal areas of Pakistan and its abuse had penetrated every segment of society. The representative of Pakistan informed the meeting of measures that had been adopted to counter the heroin epidemic, such as the eradication of illicit cultivation of the opium poppy, the elimination of processing laboratories, the treatment and rehabilitation of abusers. Some 110 clandestine processing laboratories had been eliminated on the border between Afghanistan and Pakistan in the past five years.

8. The representative of Turkey reported that the use of illicit drugs was minimal in his country. He proposed the initiation of a study, in collaboration with the United Nations Fund for Drug Abuse Control (UNFDAC), to ascertain the underlying sociological causes of that phenomenon with a view to finding modalities to tackle the problem.

9. The representative of India informed the Sub-Commission that the quantities of opium, heroin and cannabis resin seized in his country had declined in 1989, mainly as a result of strict and intensified law enforcement measures introduced in his country. That trend was also borne out in the latest report of ICPO/Interpol, prepared on the occasion of the fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly of Interpol in December 1989, according to which the bulk of heroin of south-west Asian origin had started moving westwards along the Balkan route and there had been a corresponding reduction of traffic eastwards, partly as a result of streamlined law enforcement in India.

10. Some speakers reported that clandestine laboratories, used mainly for the manufacture of morphine and heroin in their countries, had been dismantled. Raw opium, heroin and chemicals used for their illicit manufacture, particularly acetic anhydride, had also been seized. Seven clandestine laboratories had been dismantled along the eastern and south-eastern borders of Turkey and significant amounts of heroin, some morphine base and precursors had been confiscated.

11. The representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran reiterated the request he had made at the twenty-fifth session of the Sub-Commission to include the consideration of acetic anhydride on the agenda of the Sub-Commission. He considered it to be of primary importance, as the availability of acetic anhydride, illicitly imported from developed countries, continued to be a major problem. It was the main precursor used in the clandestine production of morphine and heroin in the region of the Sub-Commission.

12. Cannabis in various forms continued to be produced, abused and trafficked on a large scale in several countries of the region. Large seizures were reported by Egypt, India, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Jordan, Pakistan, Syrian Arab Republic and Turkey.

13. Several speakers mentioned the comprehensive control measures being implemented to curb the illicit supply of narcotic drugs. The representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran reported that no illicit poppy cultivation or clandestine laboratory for producing heroin had been detected in his country. Acetic anhydride had been closely controlled and no diversion into the illicit traffic had occurred. The representative of Pakistan stated that his Government was implementing a set of programmes to eradicate the production of opium at its source and to counter illicit traffic in narcotic drugs by effective drug law enforcement action.

14. The United States of America remained the principal market for cocaine consumption. Sustained efforts were, however, being made by traffickers to find other markets, particularly in western Europe. The observer for ICPO/Interpol stated that there was evidence of a regular flow of cocaine from South America to the Near and Middle East; significant consignments of cocaine from Brazil destined for Damascus had been seized at Copenhagen. Lebanese nationals were playing a major role in such traffic.

15. Several speakers reported considerable abuse of and traffic in psychotropic substances in the region, particularly fenetylline, which was often found on the illicit market under the brand name Captagon (R). Large seizures of Captagon tablets were reported in Jordan, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. Several speakers referred to the seizure of large quantities of Captagon tablets that were adulterated or that contained no fenetylline. Kuwait reported the seizure of large quantities of tablets containing psychotropic substances; Egypt reported the seizure of amphetamines and barbiturates. Illicit trafficking in methaqualone, manufactured clandestinely in India, through some African countries to South Africa, had continued on a reduced scale. India had registered its first seizure of phenobarbital tablets in 1989.

16. Several speakers described new trends in the illicit traffic and highlighted the operational successes of their national drug law enforcement agencies. Several speakers mentioned the arrest of an increasing number of persons of different nationality engaged in the illicit traffic. The representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran reported on successful major operations against heavily armed traffickers on the eastern desert border of his country, which had resulted in large seizures, the arrest of major traffickers and the dismantling of drug trafficking syndicates. In spite of vigorous law enforcement measures, the number of organized criminal groups involved in the illicit traffic and the quantities of narcotic drugs seized, particularly heroin and opium, were increasing. Several speakers referred to new detection and investigative techniques adopted to counter illicit drug trafficking. In this connection some speakers emphasized the importance of training drug law enforcement personnel. The representative of Turkey

reported successful results obtained from the use of drug-scenting dogs and electronic detecting equipment, such as fibre-scope scanners, at some Turkish border points. Successful results had also been achieved by providing financial rewards to informers and law enforcement personnel. Pakistan had also obtained successful results by using electronic equipment for the detection and surveillance of narcotic drugs at border points, especially at international airports.

17. One representative noted with satisfaction that several other countries recognized the links between illicit traffic, international terrorism, subversive activities and other organized crime.

18. Several speakers commented on the trafficking routes and the modus operandi adopted by drug traffickers in the region. It was observed that the economic and commercial ties between countries in western Europe and those in the Middle East had increased the importance of the Balkan route, especially for transport international routier (TIR) trucks. It was emphasized that the sheer number of TIR trucks, estimated to be over 240,000 in Turkey in 1989, and the long distances to be controlled created major difficulties for drug law enforcement authorities. Over 30 per cent of all seized narcotic drugs in Turkey had been located in vehicles. Mention was made of the important role played by Turkey in intercepting large consignments of illicit drugs along the Balkan route and in providing valuable operational information to other countries. This had facilitated the seizure of major illicit consignments and the elimination of some important trafficking syndicates in western Europe.

19. The representative of Egypt informed the meeting that traffickers continued to devise new routes for large consignments of cannabis resin, such as transporting them across the Mediterranean Sea and through the Suez Canal to the Red Sea and, eventually, to a landing point on the Sudanese coast. The illicit consignments would subsequently be smuggled into Egypt by land. Reference was made to the seizure in the Suez Canal of 7 tons of cannabis resin on the cargo vessel Thanassis, which had arrived from the Mediterranean. Heroin and cannabis resin continued to be smuggled via the Sinai peninsula.

20. Some speakers emphasized the importance their Governments attached to programmes for reducing demand through preventive education, treatment and rehabilitation of drug-dependent persons and promoting community activities to prevent drug abuse. Such measures were considered to be a necessary complement to programmes for reducing supply through law enforcement. The importance of the world ministerial summit to reduce demand for drugs and to combat the cocaine threat, to be held in London in April 1990, was emphasized.

21. All speakers emphasized the paramount importance of regional co-operation in combating illicit drug trafficking. Concerted action involving the co-operation of Governments in the region was essential to countering the escalating trends in drug abuse and illicit traffic. It was observed that the rapid exchange of information between law enforcement agencies in the region was a prerequisite to such co-operation. Several speakers referred to bilateral and regional agreements or other forms of co-operation and reported on the positive results achieved through such channels. The Sub-Commission was informed by the representative of India of a meeting of the South Asian Association for Regional Co-operation (SAARC) on harmonization of drug laws in the SAARC countries, held at Delhi in December 1989. At their next meeting at Colombo in January 1990, the members of SAARC would consider the adoption of a convention against illicit traffic in that region. Mention was made of the Second Interregional Meeting of Heads of National Drug Law Enforcement

Agencies (Interregional HONLEA), held at Vienna from 11 to 15 September 1989 (E/CN.7/1990/?), which had provided much needed personal contact between drug law enforcement agencies and had paved the way for further determined efforts in the fight against illicit traffic. One representative emphasized the importance of the special session of the General Assembly to consider the question of international co-operation against illlicit production, supply, demand, trafficking and distribution of narcotic drugs, to be held at United Nations Headquarters from 20 to 23 February 1990.

22. Special tribute was paid to the role played by the United Nations and its relevant drug control units in providing guidance and support in combating illicit drug trafficking. Some speakers stated that the achievement of their national drug interdiction programmes had been enhanced by the support provided by the United Nations drug control units.

23. The representative of Afghanistan stated that his country was situated at the crossroads of illicit drug trafficking and that the ongoing war waged by armed opposition groups had contributed to the wide-scale cultivation and production of illicit narcotic drugs, particularly in remote areas of the country. He pointed to substantial seizures of opium, heroin, cannabis resin and Mandrax tablets as a testimony of the effective measures that had been undertaken to deal with the problem. He mentioned the programmes adopted by his Government in the areas of drug demand reduction, treatment and rehabilitation. He deplored the fact that assistance to his Government in the fight against illicit drug trafficking and in drug demand reduction programmes had been suspended, despite the urgent need for such assistance. He called on the United Nations, particularly the Division of Narcotic Drugs and UNFDAC, to renew assistance to his country in its struggle against drug abuse and illicit drug trafficking.

III. PROVISIONAL APPLICATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION AGAINST ILLICIT TRAFFIC IN NARCOTIC DRUGS AND PSYCHOTROPIC SUBSTANCES

24. For its discussion of item 4, on the provisional application of the United Nations Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances, adopted in 1988, 1/ the Sub-Commission had before it a note by the Secretary-General on the provisional application of the 1988 Convention (E/CN.7/1990/7).

25. The representative of Jordan informed the meeting that his Government had completed the internal mechanism required to ratify the 1988 Convention; its instrument of ratification was in the process of being deposited with the Secretary-General.

26. Those who spoke on item 4 stressed the importance that their Governments attached to the 1988 Convention entering into force at the earliest date possible so that the international community would be provided with an effective instrument to counter the illicit traffic in narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances. Some speakers described measures being taken in their countries that would enable their Governments to ratify or accede to the Convention in the near future.

27. Several speakers informed the meeting that the legislation in their countries was being amended to bring it into line with the provisions of the 1988 Convention. Some speakers referred to new administrative and legal measures adopted or being considered for adoption in their countries that would enable some of the measures provided in the Convention to be applied in their countries pending its entry into force, in accordance with resolution 2

of the Final Act of the United Nations Conference for the Adoption of a Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances. 2/ Other speakers indicated that some of the provisions of the 1988 Convention had already been covered by existing legislation in their countries. Some speakers reiterated their strong support for draft resolution III, recommended by the Sub-Commission at its twenty-fifth session for adoption by the Commission on Narcotic Drugs, which urged States members of the Sub-Commission to initiate steps for expeditious ratification of the Convention and for the provisional application of its substantive provisions (E/CN.7/1990/3 and Corr.1, chap.I, sect.C).

28. Several speakers indicated that the penal codes in their countries had been amended to encompass the new criminal offences stipulated in article 3 of the 1988 Convention. The representatives of Egypt and India indicated that new legislation had been adopted in their countries in 1989 with a view to providing more stringent penalties, including the death penalty, to serve as a deterrent to drug traffickers. A major innovation included the adoption of legislative measures to counter the economic power of drug traffickers by confiscating property and assets derived from drug trafficking. A new law was being prepared in Turkey for the application of the provisions of article 11 on controlled delivery.

IV. PROGRESS REPORTS (a) ON THE DETECTION OF ILLICIT CULTIVATION OF NARCOTIC PLANTS BY REMOTE SENSING; (b) ON PRE-TRIAL DESTRUCTION OF SEIZED NARCOTIC DRUGS, PSYCHOTROPIC SUBSTANCES, PRECURSORS AND ESSENTIAL CHEMICALS; AND (c) ON ENVIRONMENTALLY SAFE METHODS FOR THE ERADICATON OF ILLICIT NARCOTIC PLANTS

29. For its consideration of item 5, the Sub-Commission had before it the reports of three meetings: that of the expert group on pre-trial destruction of seized narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances, precursors and essential chemicals (E/CN.7/1990/7/Add.1); that of the expert group on environmentally safe methods for the eradication of illicit narcotic plants (E/CN.7/1990/CRP.7); and that of the expert group on the detection of illicit cultivation of narcotic plants by remote sensing (E/CN.7/1990/CRP.15).

30. The Division of Narcotic Drugs was commended for convening the expert group meetings, which had made important proposals and recommendations for dealing with the illicit traffic. The representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran reiterated the concern he had expressed at the twenty-fifth session of the Sub-Commission with regard to the urgent need to identify illicit poppy cultivation in the region of the Sub-Commission. He indicated that, if there was general agreement among the member States of the Sub-Commission, his Government was prepared to co-operate with the Division and to provide the necessary facilities in connection with the detection of illicit cultivation of narcotic plants by remote sensing. He observed that, in view of the alarming increase in the quantities of opium and heroin seized in the region of the Sub-Commission, it was necessary to ascertain the scale and location of illicit poppy cultivation so that appropriate countermeasures could be adopted.

31. One representative, referring to the report on the meeting of the expert group on pre-trial destruction of seized narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances, precursors and essential chemicals (E/CN.7/1990/7/Add.1), stated that recent legislation in his country had made the pre-trial destruction of seized drugs possible, thereby streamlining evidentiary procedures. Referring

to the report on the meeting of the expert group on environmentally safe methods for the eradication of illicit narcotic plants (E/CN.7/1990/CRP.7), he said that the eradication of such plants, essentially cannabis, were being done by uprooting them; no herbicides were being used.

V. OTHER BUSINESS

32. The Sub-Commission considered item 6 of its agenda, entitled "Other business", at its 2nd meeting, on 24 January 1990.

33. A presentation was given on the work carried out by the United Nations Laboratory at Vienna on fenetylline. The meeting was informed that, following a review of the literature, laboratory methods for the identification and analysis of fenetylline preparations had been selected. The methods would be published in the near future and distributed to the members of the Sub-Commission. The United Nations Laboratory, in co-operation with interested national laboratories, had started developing an impurity profiling method for the differentiation of licit (diverted) and illicit (clandestinely synthesized or compounded) fenetylline tablets. In order to develop the method even further, the United Nations Laboratory would be interested in receiving samples of seized fenetylline preparations as a form of scientific co-operation. The meeting was informed that, for legal reasons, the analytical results obtained by the United Nations Laboratory on such samples could not be used as evidence in court or other legal proceedings. Instead, the analysis should be regarded as a form of assistance to States and the results should be confirmed by competent national laboratories.

34. A video presentation was made on the detection of clandestine laboratories and detection techniques for vehicles in Turkey.

VI. DRAFT DECISIONS BEFORE THE SUB-COMMISSION

35. At its 3rd meeting, on 25 January, the Sub-Commission approved a draft decision (DND/26.SC/1990/L.2) for adoption by the Economic and Social Council through the Commission on Narcotic Drugs, sponsored by Egypt, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Jordan, Kuwait, Oman and Saudi Arabia.

VII. ADOPTION OF THE REPORT OF THE SUB-COMMISSION

36. At its 3rd meeting, on 25 January, the Sub-Commission adopted the report on its twenty-sixth session.

VIII. ORGANIZATION OF THE SESSION

A. Opening and duration of the session

37. The Sub-Commission held its twenty-sixth session at Vienna from 24 to 25 January 1990. On behalf of the Secretary-General, the Director of the Division of Narcotic Drugs opened the session. Statements were made by the Director of the Division and the Chairman.

38. The Director of the Division noted that the enlarged membership of the Sub-Commission offered new avenues for regional co-operation to combat illicit drug trafficking and drug abuse in the region. The Chairman, noting that illicit drug trafficking, production and consumption had assumed alarming

proportions in the region, stressed the importance of States moving expeditiously towards building and maintaining a strong drug law enforcement infrastructure with highly specialized and effective personnel to suppress illicit drug trafficking in the region. He stated that high priority should be given to demand reduction programmes, especially those involving youth.

B. Attendance

39. The following States members of the Sub-Commission were represented: Afghanistan, Egypt, India, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Sweden, Turkey and United Arab Emirates.

40. The following States sent observers: Austria, Bahrain, Canada, Denmark, Qatar, Spain, Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and United States of America.

41. The United Nations Secretariat was represented by the secretariat of the International Narcotics Control Board, the United Nations Fund for Drug Abuse Control and the Division of Narcotic Drugs.

42. The International Narcotics Control Board was represented.

43. The following intergovernmental organizations sent representatives: Colombo Plan Bureau; Council of Arab Ministers of the Interior; International Criminal Police Organization; League of Arab States.

C. Election of officers

44. At its 1st meeting, on 24 January 1990, the Sub-Commission elected the following officers by acclamation:

Chairman: Yahya Mahmassani (Lebanon)

Vice-Chairman: M. M. Bhatnagar (India)

Vice-Chairman: Seyed Hossein Fakr (Islamic Republic of Iran)

D. Agenda

45. The agenda of the twenty-sixth session, as adopted by the Sub-Commission at its 1st meeting, was as follows:

1. Election of officers.
2. Adoption of the agenda.
3. Further developments in regional trends in the illicit drug traffic since the twenty-fifth session.
4. Provisional application of the 1988 Convention.
5. Progress reports:
   (a) On the detection of illicit cultivation of narcotic plants by remote sensing;
   (b) On pre-trial destruction of seized narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances precursors and essential chemicals;
   (c) On environmentally safe methods for the eradication of illicit narcotic plants.
6. Other business.
7. Recommendations.
8. Adoption of the report of the Sub-Commission.

E. Closure of the session

46. At the 3rd meeting, on 25 January 1990, the offer by the Islamic Republic of Iran to act as host to the Sub-Commission at its twenty-seventh session was confirmed (E/CN.7/1990/3, chap. I, sect. E). The Chairman, on behalf of the Sub-Commission, thanked the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran for its generous offer. The Sub-Commission decided to convene its twenty-seventh meeting at Teheran.

47. In response to a question regarding the commitments of a Government undertaking to act as host to a session of the Sub-Commission in one of the capitals in the regions, the Director of the Division explained that, whenever a Government offered to host a meeting of the United Nations, it should be in a position to guarantee the participation of all those invited by the United Nations to attend the meeting. To that effect, all those invited to participate in such a meeting should be able to enter and leave the host country unimpeded and should be provided with visas and entry permits where required. That and other conditions are detailed in an exchange of letters between the United Nations and the host country before the arrangements for any meeting are finalized. Thus, that basic condition would be brought to the attention of not only the Islamic Republic of Iran, but also any other Government subsequently proposing to host a session of the Sub-Commission. The observance of that condition was important given the desire of the Sub-Commission, expressed at its twenty-fifth session at Ankara, to reinstate the practice of holding alternate sessions in one of the capitals in the region.

48. The representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran stated that the conditions were understood. Referring to a meeting of the World Health Organization that had recently been held at Teheran, he assured the meeting that there would be no problem in holding the twenty-seventh session of the Sub-Commission in his country.

Notes

1/ E/CONF.82/15 and Corr.2.
2/ E/CONF.82/14, annex.

Annex

LIST OF DOCUMENTS

Document	Title	Agenda item
DND/26.SC/1990/1	Provisional agenda	2
DND/26.SC/1990/L.1	Draft report	
DND/26.SC/1990/L.2	Membership of the Sub-Commission on Illicit Drug Traffic and Related Matters in the Near and Middle East: draft decision submitted by Egypt, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Jordan, Kuwait, Oman, Saudi Arabia and Turkey	
E/CN.7/1990/3 and Corr.1	Report of the Sub-Commission on Illicit Drug Traffic and Related Matters in the Near and Middle East on its twenty-fifth session	4, 5
E/CN.7/1990/7	Report of the Secretary-General on the entry into force and provisional application of the 1988 United Nations Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances	4
E/CN.7/1990/7/Add.1	Report on the meeting of the Expert Group on Pre-Trial Destruction of Seized Narcotic Drugs, Psychotropic Substances, Precursors and Essential Chemicals	5
E/CN.7/1990/CRP.7	Report of the Expert Group Meeting on Environmentally Safe Methods for the Eradication of Illicit Narcotic Plants	5
E/CN.7/1990/CRP.15	Report on the meeting of the expert group on the detection of illicit cultivation of narcotic plants by remote sensing	5